

SARAH LEE YANG

THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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(1908 -)

Sarah Lee Yang describes her three-generation family's emigration from Korea in 1903 to the island of Maui where she was born and where she received her early education.

Mrs. Yang tells of her further education at McKinley High School, the Territorial Normal School, then at Greeley, Colorado. After her return to Hawaii, Mrs. Yang taught at Kawananakoa School, obtained her fifth year certificate from the University of Hawaii, and became affiliated with the University Laboratory School.

Her teaching experiences of some forty years, her family experiences raising four sons, and her travels are recalled by Mrs. Yang. She also tells of her activities after her retirement.

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INTERVIEW WITH SARAH LEE YANG

(MRS. JAY YONG YANG)

At her Manoa home, 2908 Kalawao Place, Honolulu, Hawaii

October 1, 1986

Y: Sarah Lee Yang

S: Alice Sinesky, Interviewer

S: I'd like you to start with a little bit about your family.

Y: Well, 1903 was when the one and only group of Koreans emigrated from Korea, the one and only group that Emperor Yi of the Yi Dynasty allowed to come to America. Hawaii definitely was America. I call it serendipity. That was the first group of Koreans allowed to come to America because by then they had too many Chinese and too many Japanese. The only other Asian group left was the Koreans.

S: They had been recruited to come?

Y: Oh, definitely. The nicest thing about it was that they were recruited through the missionaries in Korea. Most of them had become Christians already like my mother. My mother became a Christian in 1866. That's why she had the name Sera, the Biblical Korean Sarah. That's why my name is Sarah.

The beautiful part, as far as I'm concerned, is that most of them came--naturally, there were bachelors to work in the sugar cane fields, but here was my family--three generations. My granddad at age sixty-one. In Korean culture, Korean belief, civilization, whatever, if you can live until you are sixty, then sixty-one means you begin your second cycle of life. I remember my mother telling me the story. He said, "Na-du-ga-ho-ja-ku-na." That means, "Let me come along, too." (laughs)

So three generations came; my granddad at age sixty-one; my father, age thirty-five; my mother, age thirty-eight. Of course, I asked her why she was older. I always felt the wife should be younger. Anyhow, that was the second generation. The third generation was two sons. The oldest was seven and a half years old. His name indicates that he

was the first brother. "Il" is number one, "Hyung" is brother. His name was Il Hyung so he was number one brother. Nobody needs to be told that he was the first son in the family.

In the meantime, they had, through infant mortality, lost four sons in a row. The second son was a little one about a year and a half, I think. So you see, my granddad, my parents and my two brothers, three generations arrived.

Another nice thing about it was that they all came as a group and the group was led by my family. They all did what my grandfather told them to do. My grandfather was a six-footer. There's his picture right there. Can you recognize his portrait? Doesn't he look wonderful?

S: He does indeed.

Do you have any idea of how many were in this group that came?

Y: Yes, I do. I edited two periodicals. The first one, I think was to celebrate the seventy-fifth year of the coming of the first Koreans. I edited that. It's a museum piece. I edited that particular magazine, then later I edited another magazine, the seventy-fifth year of the Koreans in Hawaii.

You know, they were sent as a group to Maui. Previous to that I'm sure there were other Korean groups, but I don't know too much about that. There was one group that was sent to Ewa plantation before my parents arrived. The second group was sent in toto to Puunene, Maui, in central Maui. That's where my parents, as leaders, lived for two years. In central Maui they irrigated sugar through artificial means, pipes. Not enough rain.

Hana side, which is east Maui, was a wet place. They decided to start a sugar plantation there. It was called Kipahula Sugar Plantation. My parents decided to move. They were really pioneers there. What the plantation people did--the plantation manager's name was John Chalmers. He gave them whatever they needed by way of lumber and things like that. Choose a spot that you like and start your own community.

There was Hana, which was the city part, and about four miles up east was Kaeleku. My parents chose a spot about two and a half miles further up where the sunrise--they always go where the sun rises. There's something about the sunrise that is an inspiration to any human being. That's what happened.

It was first known as the Korean camp. Pretty soon it became the Yi Men Ho camp because my father's name was Yi Myun Ho. You know, forty-five years after I grew up and left I had a chance to take my husband and four sons to my birthplace and then to Hana for a trip. We met the Medeiros family, the Cabral family, the progenies were all there and they remembered Yi Men Ho camp. (laughs)

Two days in the week it was butchering days. They would butcher the cows. They would take and sell the meat and things like that. The beauty of it all was, as far as I was concerned, that I was a nature girl for thirteen years and it was not until I was age thirteen that I actually got to see what the city was like.

Before that, my two older brothers had already been sent to Honolulu to attend Mills School. There was no Mid-Pacific Institute at that time. There was Mills School for the boys and Kawaiahao Seminary for the girls. My oldest brother was already a graduate of Mills School and was a stenographer for California Packing Corporation, CPC.

My second brother, a year and three months older than I, was still attending Mills School. I came with all intentions of attending Kawaiahao Seminary. My two brothers took me there. I said, "This is not a big school." My mother had told me, "You go to Honolulu and choose the biggest school to go to." The biggest school was McKinley High School. "I want to go to McKinley." "You can't go there. There's no place for you to stay. There's no dormitory." "You mean in a big city like this we cannot find a place to live?" I insisted on going.

I went to the library first and got data about Kaiulani Home. I found out it was a place for working women and the house mothers' names were Miss Flood and Mrs. Warren. In my young mind I already knew that I should talk to Mrs. Warren because she was married and she would understand a young girl's plight. I did. I talked to Mrs. Warren and she said, "Oh, Sarah, you're lucky. We have another girl here who really would like to stay and she's going to high school like you. Her name is Alice Ten. We couldn't let her stay. Now you can because the two of you can room together in the same room."

You see what happened? I lasted in Kauilani Home for two months only. Every Saturday night my brother, Kapsung Lee (Kappy), who was a terrific musician, could play the steel guitar, he could blow the saxophone and make you cry and dance. He led an orchestra and every Saturday night they'd come to Kaiulani Home and we'd dance. I remember the third Saturday that he came. I showed him my hands. (laughs) "What's the matter? Why are they so bubbly and so wrinkled?" "I've been washing dishes every day." "Why do

you have to wash dishes?" "I have to work off my demerits." (laughs) Miss Flood caught me reading under the bed with a candle and she gave me demerits every time and I had to work off my demerits by washing dishes. I think I read all of Zane Grey's novels that the Library of Hawaii had.

So we went hunting for a house and we found a two-bedroom house near Royal School in the Punchbowl area. We rented the place. Kept house. I walked from near Royal School all the way to McKinley every day. Back and forth.

S: Who stayed in the house when you rented it? You and your two brothers?

Y: My oldest brother was already working. Just the two of us. And I waited for Mondays. I wouldn't even make my bed when I went to school on Mondays. When I returned after school, I would find that house spanking clean. Beds all made. Dishes all washed. My second brother Kenneth, Kyong-Jum. The Mills School people were smart. They had their students go to school on Saturday. Monday was their holiday. (laughs) You can't do too much mischief when there aren't too many of you around. So Monday was a holiday for them in those days.

S: Tell me about elementary school over on Maui.

Y: Oh, I told you I was a nature girl for thirteen years there. Right off the bat I remember we had to walk from the Korean camp. It was two and a half miles. The first school, of course, was Ulaino school. Ulaino school was the opposite direction. You had to walk from the Korean camp west. Mrs. Marian P. Morrell. I still remember her. I think of her always as an angel.

She had a daughter Kathleen. There are two things that I remember about the first day of school. My two brothers took me there. They were already attending the school. I just loved those desks in a row. With the left hand on one desk. Just skipping for joy down the row. I just loved that school.

Mother had made me a beautiful lunch box. When it was lunchtime, I went out to eat my lunch and it was all empty. (laughs) Kathleen had eaten it all up. That was when I tasted my first sandwich and I hated it. Mrs. Marian Morell her mother, had to make me a sandwich to eat and I didn't like it all. I wanted my rice and kim chee.

S: There were your two older brothers and yourself. Did your mother have any other children?

Y: No, my mother had prayed and prayed to God. After having those seven sons in a row, sons who had died before

she left Korea, she prayed to God. "If you will only give me a daughter. That daughter of mine will never marry. She will grow up and follow in the footsteps of Christ and be a teacher." And so I was and I'm still teaching. I teach thirteen different things in my studio.

S: So she was blessed with her daughter.

Y: Yes, and I didn't marry for six years.

S: Your mother and father stayed on Maui while the three of you were over here in Honolulu?

Y: When we were able to we had them all come out to live with us. I remember, too, they gave their whole lives to the sugar plantation there. We needed fifty dollars cash for them to pay steamer fare and all. We went to John Chalmers for the fifty dollars and they wouldn't give it to us. You see, we never saw cash. We had to go to the Hana store and buy all our foodstuffs and things. We never saw any cash.

What happened was that when the World War came in 1914, the Japanese had to evacuate and the manager of the plantation gave us the Japanese school building. So from the Korean camp we moved down to the Japanese school building for the rest of our sojourn there on Maui. It was a long building. My granddad took the room on the eastern end of it and we took the rooms on the other side. There was a big kitchen in the back. Two stairways going up. It's plain as a picture. I can see that clearly. So, you see, I was a nature girl there for thirteen years and at thirteen I graduated from eighth grade.

William P. Haia was principal of the school. Clarence Dyson was the principal of Kaeluka school, but Kaeluka school, I think, only had through third grade. Beginning with fourth grade, we had to walk five miles to go to Hana to go to school. I remember we had to wear shoes to go to school, my mother said. We had to obey her. After half a mile we took off our shoes and hid them under the rocks and went barefooted. Everybody else went barefooted, but my mother insisted that we wear shoes. You are civilized. (laughs)

My mother was a genius. No question about it. I have a seven-page typewritten article about my mother somewhere. It is finished. That's my next project, to get it printed and give to all my friends.

S: And your children.

Y: I have four sons. My husband was a George Washington University grad. Funny, the way we met. In those days we had what was known as the Territorial Normal and Training

School here in Honolulu. Many of my classmate friends, after graduating from McKinley High School in 1927, decided to go to the university, but I told them, "I can't. I can't wait four years to become a teacher. I want to become a teacher so badly. You'll still be attending school and I'll be teaching."

So I went to the Territorial Normal and Training School for two years and graduated with five honors. (laughs) In those days they said they'd give you one honor, but I got five honors. That was 1927. John Dewey, you've heard of John Dewey. His little book "A Common Faith" was my Bible. I graduated from Territorial Normal and Training School just when John Dewey's philosophy was really being emphasized, even to us in our college class.

Dr. Vern Sayers, my philosophy professor, was really another John Dewey himself and I became the third John Dewey. I read everything I could get ahold of. I even found a magazine, a magazine printed in China with John Dewey's writings as I recall. That's the reason why when I wrote my master's thesis later on, it had this great title, "The Implications of the Philosophy of Respect for Personality as Described by John Dewey for Secondary Education." (laughs)

Then I had the very good fortune of meeting another woman by the name of Alice Keliher. I was only a teenager, as I remember.

S: Were you at Normal School at this time?

Y: No, no, no. I was just a teenager at this time.

S: Still at McKinley?

Y: Most likely. It was called Life and Growth by Alice Keliher. I know I bought two of those books and they're gone. Somebody borrowed and never returned. I must call the library and see if they have any copies of those. The first chapter is about Cyrano de Bergerac and how he lived through and became a sane individual with the face that he had and the nose that he had. I remember saying to myself, "One day I'm going to meet the author of this book." And, sure enough, I did.

In those days when I was teaching in Hawaii, during the summer sessions you had people listed a mile long. They all wanted to come to Hawaii to teach at the summer classes at the University and Normal School. Of course, when Alice Keliher came, that was the first thing I did. The first thing I did was to meet her.

She was exactly the type of person that I imagined her to be even without meeting her before, by reading what she

had written. A huge person with a motherly voice, so comfortable. She came the summer when I was writing my master's thesis. Dean Benjamin Wist gave me a brand new typewriter and an office. "Get that thesis written now," because in between I became pregnant and had my oldest son, Hal. "You can't do that any more. Don't get a second son until you finish your thesis." I did finish it.

John Dewey's philosophy started actually with the opening of that progressive school called the Kawananakoa Experimental School with George Axtelle as the first principal. To staff that school they chose the top teachers from all the neighboring islands. The best teachers. In those days you see, a graduate ready to teach school was never allowed to teach in the city. That was a premium. So we had to go out to the "country" (neighbor islands) and in ten years, maybe, you'd have a position in town.

S: So you went to McKinley and then the Normal School and then...

Y: Then I was supposed to go to Paia to teach on the island of Maui. Mrs. Fleming, the principal of the school, used to come to Normal to "case the joint" as it were, the seniors. She left word that she wanted me to come to her school to teach. I was all packed and ready to go but one week before, I got a call from Dean Benjamin Wist, "We are not sending you to Maui. We want you to stay right here as an experiment. We're going to send you to that John Dewey experimental school to teach and see what you can do with the top teachers in the Islands." (laughs)

I started crying. I said, "No, I must go to Paia because if I go to Paia, then I can go across to Hana where I was born and see what it's like there now." "Oh, my," he said, "you are really, really something. You should be dancing for joy instead of crying." I remember him telling me that.

S: I was going to say that it would be such an honor to be chosen for that.

Y: Right, and I was ready to go. I even had toilet paper ready. (laughs) They told me to be sure and bring a roll of toilet paper with me and print my name on each sheet because "everybody steals toilet paper around here." (laughter) That was the funniest thing I ever heard.

So I never got to go. Again, you see, fortune was with me. Serendipity. The Lord is always with me. George Axtelle, evidently, had sent a top teacher, Dorothy Takafuji, in his school to come to the graduation exercise. There was an article in the paper about me, too, how I was graduating with five honors. This top teacher came to the graduation

exercise and heard me. I gave the so-called valedictorian speech that night. Of course, she went back and told George Axtelle, "We must have Sarah Lee come." And she told him, "I want her to teach with me."

We were teaching two sixth grade classes. Each class of two, they were divided according to IQ from the top to the bottom. The top half and the bottom half was the second group. After we talked together, I remember Dorothy telling me, "Sarah Lee, I'm going to let you take the top class because you could never teach the slow ones." (laughter) She could see that I had no patience.

S: You wanted things to move right along.

Y: It was just great. I remember times that I went and cried on her shoulder. I was so dissatisfied with my teaching. I wasn't getting too many results. I still remember staying up nights the whole week before I met the class for the first time. When they came, they found a spanking class room. I had gone down on my hands and knees and scrubbed the floor and everything. I had this huge wall paper clear around the classroom with crayons. They were supposed to write on the wall whatever they wanted me to teach them, anything that they wanted me to teach them. Someone wrote tap dancing, so I taught them tap dancing. (I went to the YW to learn how.) (laughs) We had more fun.

S: How big a class did you have?

Y: We had over forty.

S: Which nowadays would be considered tremendous.

Y: It would be two classes now. I lasted only one year. I worked hard and was a good teacher for one year. Then I made up my mind that I would be a much better teacher if I'd go to college and get my degree. I only had my two years Normal School diploma. Dean Benjamin Wist got me a \$60 scholarship. In those days there were only two top teachers colleges. There was Columbia in New York City, and that was too far away for this country gal to go and the second one was at Greeley, Colorado. So I went there.

I did two years' work in a year and one summer. I wanted to get back home and do the real McCoy, the real thing, work with flesh and blood kids. I remember the Fourth of July there. Everybody left Greeley. You know how it is. The people in the city leave to go to the country and the people in the country are coming to the city. Here I was, all by myself with the key to the library because I told them that I had to write my term papers. (laughs) I was the only one in that library working. I still remember that Fourth of July.

I didn't mind that at all because I'm a bookworm. I love to read and I love to write. You can tell. (Her house was stacked with books and magazines)

So John Dewey, John Dewey.

S: And you came back from Colorado with what type of a degree?

Y: BEd.

S: Bachelor of Education. And you came back here.

Y: I remember when I was leaving for Colorado. I can see a picture already. I'm on the boat, the SS Manoa, which took about six days to cross the Pacific Ocean. There was a Caucasian gentleman beside me and he saw all these youngsters running down and crying and waving. "What's the matter with those kids?" "Those are all my sixth grade students that I had last year. They're so sorry to see me go because I was to take them to the seventh grade next year." He told me if he saw his teacher, he would tell her to go quick, quick, quick. He wouldn't cry. (laughs) I remember him telling me that. I told him that he never had a teacher like me. I still remember that conversation that I had with that man.

They had gotten excuses from the seventh grade teacher to come and say goodbye to "Miss Lee." Do you know that thirty years later, I got up one Saturday morning and opened the Advertiser and see my face looking at me in the front page? The article said, "Miss Lee's Class." One of the students who was in that class had his family here. Wah Jan Chong was an attorney in New York City by then. He wanted to surprise me so he got the surviving members of Miss Lee's class from 1928 and had a party. I cried and cried all night. Tears of joy. Tears of thankfulness, gratefulness.

Life has been good to me. It definitely has. I have absolutely no complaints. And now, you see, I'm enjoying perfect health. Ask me how I'm coming along. Today I went to this Home Economics Extension class at McCully Library. It was in the "What to Do" column and I checked it off. It was a splendid program. Those ladies really can do things and they know how to share. They do it so simply and so genuinely because they really care.

The one in charge was Amy Wong. Up until last week, I had a macrame hanging right there with a card written by Amy Wong. She was one of my students before, which meant that I hadn't seen her for thirty or forty years. We just hugged and hugged.

S: When you came back from Greeley, you resumed your teaching career?

Y: When I came back from Greeley, that's when I met this young man with a moustache. By golly, he was handsome and he had a line. A mutual friend, a medical doctor, Dr. Y. P. Kang and his wife, one of the first Korean public school teachers, Mary. This young fellow had come back from the mainland a few weeks before I had and I didn't even know who he was. We met at the Kang's residence because it was a welcome home party for him and for me, too. When I met him, I knew right away that he was going to be my man. (laughs)

He was very articulate. Oh, good looking. Really good looking. He was a George Washington University graduate. His parents were poor and couldn't see him through financially, so he worked his way through college. It took him eight years. He worked his way through college by selling magazines.

S: Where was his home originally?

Y: Wahiawa on the island of Oahu. We had never met. That was unusual because the Koreans are a minority and we are usually able to meet. We never met until we came back. I think it was the first week in September that I was back home. People were all dancing in the living room and somehow he and I found ourselves on the back porch and we started talking. I remember that he took out a cigarette and offered me one. I had never smoked in my life, but I took it. (laughter)

S: That was a clue, wasn't it?

Y: He asked me for a date. We had only two dates when he proposed marriage. He was in a doggone hurry. I told him that I was in no hurry to get married because I told him that the man I marry I've got to know inside and outside both. (laughs) I don't know what I meant by that.

S: What was he doing at that time?

Y: He had returned after eight years and the Hawaiian Electric had already hired him. His degree was in electrical engineering. He wasn't going to stay long. He was going to go back to the mainland to work on his MA. But when he met me, he stayed. (laughs) We went together for about four years. Yes, we got married in 1934.

S: In the meantime, what did you do? Teach? (Y nods affirmatively) And where did you teach?

Y: Kawanānakoā Experimental School.

S: Then you mentioned your master's degree. What year was that?

Y: Yes, what year was it? The university people started a fifth year program because the teachers' college graduates just weren't getting jobs. There weren't enough jobs for them. They added a fifth year to their program so that when they finished the fourth year and attended the fifth year they got a certificate that was the equivalent of a master's degree.

After teaching at Kawanānakoā Experimental School and what the dean did was to send to me the student teachers that I trained for the secondary level, seventh, eighth and ninth grades. So I was connected right away with the university as the coordinator of student teachers. I was with the university for about forty years, all told, before I retired in 1972.

And imagine, one month after I retired what do you suppose? They found cancer in my left lung. This whole side is gone. The lymph nodes have all been removed. This arm (left arm) still swells. If I use it too much, it swells. I try not to use it. The doctor tells me I should always wear a sling. If I wear a sling, I won't use it. But who wants to wear a sling and go around looking like that. (laughs)

S: That was fourteen years ago.

Y: Yes. I had a radical mastectomy. I remember coming home after forty-one radiology treatments. Forty-one treatments meant eighty-two days because they had to do something on my right breast and do something by the left side of my neck, and they couldn't do it at the same time so I had to go every other day.

I remember when Dr. Gerard said, "This is your last day." Oh, at last! Celebrate! I made up my mind what to do. As soon as I said goodbye to him I stopped at Moiliili where I had cased the joint before and to make use of this arm I decided to do ceramics. Right away I ordered a kiln all the way from Seattle. When I decide to do something, I do it in a big way. (laughs) I'm motivated that way. I'm full-cocked, not half-cocked. That's why you see the kiln there and the wheel.

Nature printing is what I'd like to share with everybody. It's something that's so simple to do. Because when you print something, you just print. If I wanted to print my hand, I'd have to do that (indicates the palm) and then I'd have to print that (indicates the back). It would have to be done twice. But with this nature printing that I

do, you do it in one fell swoop. You can do the bottom and top at the same time.

If you see something, bring it in and I'll show you how to print it. I walked around and looked around. I remember looking up and down. And then, the lowly nut grass. Pull it out gently, root and all. Something told me that this is the lowly nut grass, but it's going to be beautiful. It's going to be made beautiful. I printed it and it's marvelous. The nut grass. You know what nut grass is. It's a pest. You just can't get rid of it. You dig out the root and there's a tiny half an inch root and it will grow at the bottom of the soil there.

S: Tell me some more about your husband and your boys. I gather you worked while you were having and raising your family.

Y: Absolutely. I'm reminded of a day in school. I had three sons with measles at home and I forgot all about them. I was feeding the youngsters at school. I was in the lunch line with them and then all of a sudden, "What am I doing? The three boys are sick with the measles at home and nobody's feeding them." I remember that.

The one other thing that I love to share with everybody is this beautiful story. It was five-thirty in the evening. That was when I had only two sons. Raymond, number two was in the bassinette. Harold, the eldest, was about three and a half. They all started attending preschool at the University Laboratory School when they were about two and a half. They took them because I was an instructor in the Lab School.

I remember picking them up. Ray, number two, was in the basket. Harold was standing beside me and you know when you come down University Avenue, down the hill and you get to see the automatic stop light. They had just installed the stop lights. Before that they didn't have any. And, of course, from the top I could see the green light so I just stepped on the gas. I wanted to make that green light. The red light stayed very long.

What happened was that when I got to that intersection, the light turned red on me. A healthy "damn it" came out of my mouth. It wasn't a soft "darn it." (laughs) I looked side-eyes at my son because I'd told them they can't swear like that. I thought he was the kind of kid who would tell me, "Mommy, you aren't supposed to swear like that." However, he had the nicest, kindest look on his face. So sympathetic. "Never mind, Mom, you'll be the first one at the next green light."

S: Isn't that wonderful?

Y: From the mouths of babes. It just brings tears to my eyes whenever I share that story.

I have four sons and eight granddaughters now.
(laughs)

S: There's something about an inverse ratio there that I can't explain. (laughs)

Y: Harold, the eldest, has two; Raymond, number two, has three; Vernon, number three, has two; and Al (I'm expecting Al and Pat to produce maybe a son) because they have Meredith and she's two and a half now and I'm sure they'll want a sibling for Mer.

S: All the boys are still here?

Y: No, number three is the only one here. This one wanted Hawaii to be his home so he married Diane Sugihara. She is a travelling psychological examiner for the DOE. She travels and administers tests and advises teachers. She's a lovely, lovely person.

I remember introducing my first daughter-in-law. I never, never once called them my daughters-in-law. I remember when I first introduced Georgia. "I'd like you to meet my instant daughter, Georgia." That person looked quizzically at me. "What do you mean instant daughter? Did you adopt her?" "No, they adopted me." (laughs)

S: What a nice way to look at it.

Y: Georgia is a stunning looking gal. She's an Oklahoma City gal. She maintains she has a little Cherokee Indian in her. (laughs) Her last name is Lindberg. That's number one instant daughter.

Number two is a former Narcissus Queen here, Shirley Fong. Number three, of course, is Diane Sugihara and number four is Pat Inaki of Pearl City.

S: Three out of four on the mainland now.

Y: Yes, number three is the only one here. He'll never leave Hawaii. I'll never leave Hawaii even if I'm alone. I would never leave Hawaii. This is my home. Imagine, Jay and I, this was the third home we built on a teacher's salary. How did we manage? The third home. First on Crater Road, Kaimuki, in back of the fire station. Second, Kokokahi where the YWCA is. All splendid locations. And this is the third one.

We started building this home, Jay and I, the seventh of July, 1959. They had already found cancer. Dr. Gerard asked me, "What shall we do? He has cancer in both lungs." I told him, "We can't tell him that. We have to give him hope. Just tell him you found cancer in one lung. You can live with the other lung. You have to give him hope." And you know, I can remember his words when the doctor told him he found cancer in one of his lungs. Jay's immediate question was, "What are my chances for recovery, Dr. Gerard?" And Dr. Gerard without thinking shot back at him, "Your chance is one in a million." My husband shot back at him, "I'll show you, Dr. Gerard. I'll be that one in a million." After fifteen days he declared himself well and came home! He went back for treatment every day. The boys massaged his legs every night. His legs would swell.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 1

S: You hadn't built this house yet. You had just started building?

Y: We had started building. We were living on Crater Road. I remember Rose Jenkins, who was a nurse at the Laboratory School at the university, said to me, "You know, you have a home on Crater Road, you have a home in Kaneohe and you're building a third home." I happened to have her son and daughter in my class who were A students. They wanted to become teachers. Rose told me about how they had scrimped and saved to send them to school and how they felt now that they could own a home and they knew that I was building again. They wanted to buy my home. I said, "But, Rose, you have never seen my house. How do you know that you'll like it?" She paid me the highest compliment. "Knowing you and Jay is enough. We don't have to look at it." Just like that she wanted to buy my home.

My next door neighbor was Pat Saiki then, a phys ed teacher. She's a Republican top woman now. She came over with a \$1,000 check. She wanted to buy my home. I said, "No sale. I'm not selling this home to anybody." But when Rose wanted it, I said, "Sure, you can have it."

That was what my boys couldn't understand. "You said, 'No' to Pat and 'Yes' to Rose." I had to explain to them. They were young, they didn't understand. I remember it was a Wednesday when Rose came in to see it and to buy it. They'd never been in it. Knowing us was enough. "Tomorrow's Thanksgiving. Come on over any time." I remember her coming in just one step across the doorsill. Lucius, her husband, was a tall man. He was standing behind her. She looked inside the house and turned back to him (I wish I had asked her what she said to him) for she said to him, "See, Lucius, see what I told you." (laughs)

It was a beautiful home. The whole floor was Philippine mahogany. It had a beautiful rug. There was lots of ventilation. Lots of windows. And the wall--we were the first ones to do this type of wall. We called it paint wipe job. We didn't want it painted. We didn't want the paint to cover the artistic lines of the lumber. You put the paint and then you wipe it off. That home was the first home like that. A paint wipe job indoors. And it's still beautiful because Jay chose Wolmanized lumber to do that home. And the door, a \$350 door, made up of different wood squares.

Sometimes I wish I hadn't sold that house, but Rose wanted it so. I remember when I had to move out of that house. I couldn't. I just sat in the bedroom and wept silent tears. All my friends had to come and remove all my things from the closets and help me move. I didn't want to leave that home.

S: When did you finally move from that home into this one?

Y: But for a while, for a whole summer, when I built the Kanehoe home we lived there and rented. We had not built this home. We had the Crater Road home and the Crater Road home was rented to three university professors. It was a two-story home, downstairs and upstairs. My husband's father lived downstairs with us. He had four daughters, but he refused to live with them. He preferred to live with us. He was a lovely, lovely gentleman. He lived until the age of ninety-four. Clean as a whistle. Straight. He was a minister.

S: How long did your parents live?

Y: They all had longevity. They all lived until the ripe old age of eighty-five or eighty-six. To have people at that stage of life live that long is wonderful. That means that my genes have what I call longevity. I expect to be hale and hearty until mid-eighties because I will be seventy-eight in mid-December and I'm pretty sure for the next two years there won't be much change. There can't be much change for the next two years.

S: What about your brothers? You had two older brothers.

Y: Yes. The older brother died. The only thing that's going to kill me is Alzheimer's. (laughs)

S: How old was your brother?

Y: Eighty. My granddad passed away when he was eighty-six. My father died when he was eighty-five and my mother died when she was eighty-six. My oldest brother was an Alzheimer's case.

S: What about the second brother?

Y: Oh, he's just a year and three months older than I am. We're very close. He lives out in Aina Haina and he has two sons and a daughter. They're all hale and hearty. He has two grandsons and one granddaughter. A small family.

I have eight granddaughters. That's all. Except Alan and Pat might have another one.

S: Then you were at the University School primarily?

Y: No, primarily from the Lab school. I began teaching during the summer sessions because I needed that paycheck to pay my taxes. I never had a vacation in my life, but to me teaching was a vacation anyhow. I enjoyed teaching so much and I used to love teaching in the summer because I would have teachers as my students.

S: What were you teaching at that point?

Y: I'm a generalist, I'm not a specialized person. I was teaching everything under the sun. The basic principles of education, curriculum development, and I taught methods courses, social studies, English, math. I taught everything. (laughs) I even taught PE. That's why I took up tap dancing. Especially when I had a class of older people.

The first thing that I would do when I would meet my class was to give them a twenty-minute account of what I've talked to you about. About my life and, "Well, there's fifteen of you, too long, so tonight for your homework you sit down and write me a story. The kind of story that I told you about myself." I would get to know them very well. They'd heard about me and they'd want to share, too.

I recall the largest (stout) person in that group. "Oh, all my life, Miss Lee, I wanted to learn to tap dance. Will you teach us?" Great. I taught them all how to tap dance. (laughs) I went straight down to the Y and took tap dancing lessons. Another wanted to do box furniture. I went straight to Mrs. Pope's class and learned how to do box furniture.

You see that ottoman over there? There are three, six, nine springs with horsehair. I made that. I had to make one to teach them how. That ottoman fits that (indicating the chair A is sitting on) very nicely. I made the cover to match that. It's not supposed to be a pair, but when I put the ottoman right there, it's very comfortable.

I don't apologize about the looks of my floor because this is how I live. I want you to know that this is my

organized un-confusion. I know exactly where to go when I want something. (laughs)

A: How about calling it a horizontal file?

Y: (laughs) Yes, HF. This is my HF. If you can guess what HF is, I'll teach you how to tap dance.

You can see it's a fun place. It's all kinds of fun things. Look at just this one table. (displays and demonstrates collection of bells and music boxes)

This is an African thing made from one log. I got it in Africa and brought it all the way home. I spent two months teaching in Africa. One of my dearest friends, we became sisters, she's older than I, Mary Kim. She was music chairman, when I met her, of Ewha University in Seoul, Korea. The largest women's university in the world. She was the original chairman of the music department and when she retired, she joined the Peace Corps. After she retired, they sent her all the way to Africa. When she wrote to me that she was going to Africa I said, "Even if you go to Timbuktu, I'm going to join you." So I went too.

S: What year was that?

Y: Yes, quite a ways back. It must have been after I retired. It was a community where there was a hospital and she became the teacher. She was training the students in that hospital in nursing.

S: What country in Africa?

Y: I have books galore with all the stories written about that experience there.

S: You can fill in names and dates after I transcribe this.

Y: That was a wonderful, wonderful learning experience for me.

S: Were you in a good-sized town or a village?

Y: Most likely a village, not a town. She came to the airport to get me and we drove 350 miles. We had to change cabs three times because three times it was a different country and you had to pay customs costs from one side to the other side. There was no such thing as communication. They were all separate countries. Like there was a whole big ocean. It was not a village, but civilized enough because she was there to teach. And you know who the rich people were? The Italians. Somehow they got there and they bought

the nice locations and built beautiful homes on the tops of hills. They were the money people. The Italians!

S: Well, there used to be one part of Africa that was Italian Somaliland.

Y: That might be the place then because they owned everything. They owned the huge trucks that built the roads.

S: Were you teaching here during World War II?

Y: That's when my boys started coming. Harold was a Pearl Harbor (1941) baby. We had to cover all the windows black so the light at night wouldn't show. I had a knock at the door one night and a policeman from way down, this house on Crater Road is up on a hill, said that he could see a streak of light coming from the top of the window. One little crack. So he came up all the way to tell me that I should close that. I remember that.

S: What month was your son born?

Y: October. I crawled under the bed to feed him. That time when I was pregnant, I remember shaking my blanket from that Crater Road home. It was a two-story building with a patio on top. I said, "Jay, come on out here. Our Army is supposed to be having practice, but it looks like the real McCoy. It looks real." And just when I said that, what do you suppose happened? A Japanese plane flew right over us and that's when I knew we were being attacked because it had the rising sun. I'd practically forgotten about that.

And, of course, you know what happened. The Japanese were immediately interned, but the Koreans were okay. They knew the Japanese and Koreans were enemies. So Jay immediately from his teaching was--he did something anyhow to head the people who were building this Halawa tunnel to get the water up from the artesian wells. He got involved in that. That was sort of a secret thing that was being done. It was the Halawa Tunnel.

I remember how one of my Caucasian friends who was a teacher... I guess when you're frantic, when you're afraid, you always think of the most negative things. They thought that all the Japanese here were going to be disloyal. They sold their houses for a song and left. They fled the country. They thought the Japanese people were going to be disloyal.

S: And, of course, it turned out to be the opposite.

Y: There was not a single case of disloyalty. Not one. And when you hear about how the Japanese were treated in the internment camps on the mainland, that was terrible.

S: I understand that from Hawaii there was an extremely small percentage, actually.

Did you go back to teaching during that time or did you wait until they were a little older?

Y: When Harold was a year and three months old, I was pregnant and Raymond arrived. Number two. I couldn't have gone back to teaching. I was too busy taking care of the family. Vernon, number three, arrived two years later. The three boys grew up. Here's another picture. (the three brothers) Alan arrived on Friday the thirteenth, 1950! The day President Truman arrived in Hawaii.

(Displays scrapbook) Alan, the youngest, got an assignment from his teacher to produce something. He came home and this whole floor was covered with pictures. We subscribed to Life magazine and they had such beautiful pictures. The result was this book. He made all the captions and I printed them for him. Man's Search for Purpose in Life. Some find it. Others don't. But they keep searching. See his hands in prayer. Isn't that something? This is a terrific book. And in his search each encounters in his own way emotions, one of which is happiness. Then he goes on to explain happiness. Happiness is laughter or satisfied smiles. Happiness is skipping along in soft, squeaky sand. Happiness is helping. I just love the expressions on their faces. Happiness is a kiss. Happiness is knowing something today that you didn't know yesterday. Happiness is your own teddy bear. I love this one. Happiness is crying, but in a very special way. You kind of wonder. This is a good picture for children to write stories about. Each having happiness must have sorrow.

Sorrow is sickness. Sorrow is hunger. Sorrow is having no place to go. Sorrow is leaving home. Sorrow is misunderstanding. Sorrow is nobody caring. The pictures he found and how he interpreted this.

S: How old was he?

Y: Ninth grade.

S: He was very aware, wasn't he?

Y: John Kennedy. It's such a nice picture of Kennedy. And here's the Queen Mother. This is cute. Love begins and grows. Isn't that nice? And to keep love you must have determination. Who do you suppose he has for determination? (A young baseball player) I've got to make that hit. Look

at this determination. World domination. Then he has this one. Determination. World freedom. And as long as man continues his search and as long as he keeps searching there will always be hope. Isn't that beautiful?

S: It's wonderful. And he thought up the captions?

Y: Of course, and I printed them.

S: Well, that's the joy of having a house like this where you can keep all these things and have all these memories.

Y: (Displays picture) This was when I went to Korea. I was one of the first Fulbright lecturers. I had a grant to go to Korea to teach for one full semester as a Fulbright lecturer.

S: Tell me about that.

Y: My first introduction to Korea was as a guest of the U. S. Eighth Army. For two weeks I was their guest. The Eighth Army wanted to show me off as an American Korean, not a Korean Korean.

S: And that was your first trip to Korea? What year was that?

Y: It must have been 1967, because it was sixty-five years after my parents left their homeland. When I came back, I remember writing a letter. I had kept a blow by blow account of what I had done in the two weeks I was there and I wrote a letter to Senator Fulbright himself. "Please send me back to Korea. As long as I'm in America, I'm just playing. I feel that I can do so much more." So he sent me back. I was a Fulbright lecturer in Korea for a whole semester.

S: Was this in Seoul?

Y: Of course. Ewha Women's University. As a lecturer, I was sent to every college of education all the way down to Pusan. Kyong Bok National University in South Korea. I used every means of transportation. I walked and I ran, I went on horseback, on a train, in a taxicab. One time the taxicab had a flat tire so I got out and ran the rest of the way. (laughs) A policeman saw me running and asked what was the matter. I told him and he hailed a cab going the other way. He had him turn around in a no turn around zone and made him take me to the YW.

I had another occasion like that. Ewha University is out of town and I'd be the first one in the cab. The cab takes on more people and by the time I get to the YW and I'm ready to pay my cab fare, they've all paid for me already. (laughs)

S: What subjects did you lecture on while you were in Korea?

Y: I taught classes on supervision, a graduate course in America. There they taught it to the seniors, a one semester course in supervision. I taught another course in the new mathematics. I was kept busy.

I'm the kind of person who thrives in meeting challenges. The difficulty doesn't bother me. The more innovative, the better it is. The less I know about it, the better the challenge is. That's what my mother taught me. Never give up. Never give up. You can always do it. All you need to do is have the motivation. She was really a genius.

(displays photo album) I taught mathematics with this picture book. The mathematical aspect of this would be the number three. My three sons. I taught math with this, I remember. This paper is Korean paper. I brought it home to make a book.

New York. This is the nicest picture. We found him at home sound asleep with the kitten. As soon as we took the picture, the cat decided to yawn. (picture shows sleeping son with yawning cat on stomach)

S: That is so funny.

Y: The first thing he did when we got there was take a course in photography. He was a junior in high school. We went to this hotel and all these girls came down to get the guests to dance and when they came to him, you could see that he was looking for a hole to jump in. (laughs) He was so shy.

S:: You took all the boys to New York for a vacation?

Y: No, I had to go and teach there.

S: Oh, you didn't tell me about teaching in New York.

Y: Yes, I taught at NYU. [New York University]

S: And the whole family went with you?

Y: Of course, I had to take them. This was the most beautiful thing I received on New Year's day. Most unexpected. January 1, 2:00 a.m. Here's the picture. "Dear Mrs. Yang, We couldn't let 1961 come our way without giving you our warmest wishes for a wonderful year. You've brought so much to our children, new experiences, rich communication, special insights. Your visits to PS 6 are eagerly awaited

and we hope you sense this cordial feeling when you visit us. We are sorry you cannot stay in our city forever, but our doors and our hearts are always open. Public School No. 6, The Bronx." It always makes me cry. To have New Yorkers write like that is really something, isn't it?

S: That sounds like aloha spirit, doesn't it?

Y: Everywhere I went I took this little ukulele with me. You should have seen how many people stopped. Is that a little violin? What is that? I would sit by the curbside and play them a tune. (laughs)

S: Under what program did you go? You visited different public schools in New York?

Y: I was a teaching fellow at New York University. New York University sent me around. Isn't that a beautiful thing!

S: Now you've told me about Korea and New York and Africa. What else didn't you tell me yet about travelling?

Y: Well, I've been to Russia twice. I went on a "Planetary Peace Trek." We made arrangements to meet twenty different peace groups in Russia. It was called the Planetary Peace Trek, spearheaded by Molly McGee and Gary Wintz. They're going to be here some time next year, too, to present a slide lecture. How did I happen to meet them? Well, I met them somehow and we got acquainted and they invited me to join them.

S: And what year was the first trip to Russia?

Y: I remember they said, "Meet us in Yokohama harbor." And this was Honolulu. Where is Yokohama harbor? (laughter)

I've been with that group twice already. The third time I missed it. I was supposed to go with them to Tibet, but the doctor said, "No, the altitude is bad for you." Did you know I have a heart condition? I take medication every morning.

S: So you made two trips to Russia?

Y: Two or three maybe. The first time I went was a study tour sponsored by the University of Hawaii. The second and third times I went with Gary and Molly. I'm so sorry that I couldn't make it to Tibet with them.

S: And you went to Africa?

Y: The only place I haven't been and I'm going soon, I hope, is to Australia. And I have a foster family down in

Fiji. Padmini Gaunder. I was her foster mother when she came to the East-West Center. She's begged me to come down and stay with them down in Fiji. I expect to go next year. Pan Pacific Southeast Asia Women's Association will be going. It's old, as Jane Addams started in 1928. I was president for two years. Haven't you heard about Pan Pacific Southeast Asia Women's Association?

S: I've heard the name.

Y: In fact today! There's a meeting. I forgot about it. I can hear them. "What happened to Sarah Lee?"

S: But you have a trip planned for the near future, don't you?

Y: I'm leaving on the seventeenth.

S: And that one's to Australia?

Y: No, that's back to Korea. This is going to be taking me clear down south to the island off the southern end of the peninsula of Korea. That's Cheju island. That's where I told you the women--that's the matriarchal society. The women are the breadwinners because they are the stalwart women who dive for abalone. The men stay at home and take care of the babies and wash and cook. You haven't heard of that place? Cheju-do?

S: You've never been there before?

Y: Oh yes, I've been there twice. It's beautiful. It's a perfect island. It's somewhat like Hawaii. It's an island with a high mountain in the middle. They raise oranges, pineapples and bananas. It's something like Hawaii. One end is Sogwipo. The other end is a city. [Cheju City] Sogwipo is the nature end. Oh, the waterfalls. The climate. And the people.

S: At this point do you have any distant relatives, cousins or anyone in Korea?

Y: Oh, they are, but they are up in North Korea. We are Kaesong people.

S: Have you been able to keep in touch?

Y: How can you? Absolutely no way.

They kept in touch as far as 1914 before the division. My oldest brother, Il Hyung, went back to Korea and died there. I have all the letters and I have all the addresses. I'd better take them with me when I go. The idea is that I can make it to North Korea. In fact, they told me that they

would declare a holiday when I get there because, of all places, in Red Square, Red Square, all of a sudden it looked like I belonged to some CBS broadcasting company. All of a sudden people were all around us taking pictures.

I saw these tall soldiers and something told me that the way that they walked they must be Koreans. I left my own group and ran and sure enough they were speaking Korean. In my excitement I just jumped in there. I have a picture that they took and here are these tall soldiers. I'm standing up, too, but I look like a midget. They told me that they'd declare a holiday when I got there. I had to tell them the whole story. In my excitement I yelled, "I am a Korean, too," in Korean. "Na-du-Hanguk-sa-rum-im-ni-do." They'd never heard anyone speak Korean in another country until they heard this crazy looking woman yelling. (laughs)

S: In Red Square yet.

Y: So I have their names and addresses and they said that they'd declare a holiday when I got there. So I have places to go and people to meet. In the next two years. I have to stay healthy and keep a straight mind. Forgetfulness I can't help, but I can write. But I must remember what and where I wrote.

Don't you love the hala things I do? Did you see that little mat over there? I teach people how to do lauhala weaving. I think this is the cutest little thing.

I invented this silk lei, too. Come here. You've never seen anything like this. I did this as a ninth grade project. I had my ninth graders do this. I wanted to teach them the principles of economics. You've never seen anything like this. I went to Liberty House and bought satin material. Cut it into strips. Look at all the work. We made \$110 and sent it to Korea.

S: Just tell me again how you did that. You got the satin and cut it into strips.

Y: Then you stitch it down the middle and then unravel the two sides leaving this as a middle strip so that it won't unravel totally and you twist it around so that you have this beautiful lei that looks like soft feathers, doesn't it?

S: The variations in the colors are lovely.

Y: When I look at that I tell myself, "Gee, I've been pretty creative before." Take it easy now.

S: Have you gone to classes for all of this or have you done this on your own?

Y: I'm an innovator. I teach myself everything and then I share it with others. I found this tree right in front of Hemenway Hall there. Usually hala trees have thorns, you know. Ferocious thorns. They all point in one direction. You have to gingerly pull them out. There's a couple of trees, I don't know if they're still there, I must go take a look. Once upon a time there were two hala trees there with leaves that had no thorns. And of all things, my neighbor was throwing away a hala tree. "We don't want it anymore." "Where did you get it?" "We forget where we got it." "Please let me have it." I have it growing right there in water out there. It's a hala tree and the leaves have no thorns. I'm going to dig a hole to plant it. I have lots of things to do yet. I have two pineapple trees growing with roots. I have to dig a hole and plant that pineapple. (laughs) I've got umpteen unfinished tasks. Isn't that wonderful?

S: Absolutely. All the older people I've talked to tell me that it's a combination of reasonably good health, but above all it's the mental, the idea of getting up each day and having something to look forward to.

Y: I hardly sleep. I just read about that book, Rhapsody in Nature, and I sent for it right away. It's a beautiful book. Rhapsody in Nature.

END OF TAPE 1/SIDE 2

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THE WATUMULL FOUNDATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Watumull Foundation Oral History Project began in June of 1971. During the following seventeen months eighty-eight people were taped. These tapes were transcribed but had not been put in final form when the project was suspended at the end of 1972.

In 1979 the project was reactivated and the long process of proofing, final typing and binding began. On the fortieth anniversary of the Watumull Foundation in 1982 the completed histories were delivered to the three repositories.

As the value of these interviews was realized, it was decided to add to the collection. In November of 1985 Alice Sinesky was engaged to interview and edit thirty-three histories that have been recorded to mark the forty-fifth anniversary of the Foundation.

The subjects for the interviews are chosen from all walks of life and are people who are part of and have contributed to the history of Hawaii.

The final transcripts, on acid-free Permalife bond paper and individually Velo-bound, are deposited and are available to scholars and historians at the Hawaii State Archives, the Hamilton Library at the University of Hawaii and the Cooke Library at Punahou School. The tapes are sealed and are not available.

August 1987